

News from Senator Tim Johnson, and Rep. Stephanie Herseth

For Immediate Release

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Johnson, Herseth Press FCC to Quickly Resolve Delays of Cell Tower Construction

Washington, DC – U.S. Senator Tim Johnson (D-SD) and U.S. Representative Stephanie Herseth this week urged the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to resolve the current backlog of applications for the construction of cell phone towers before the construction season ends.

According to FCC process, wireless telephone companies are required to consult with historical preservation groups and American Indian Tribes to ensure potential cell phone towers would not be constructed in areas of historical or sacred importance without proper consultation. However, the FCC does not have clear procedures set up to determine what constitutes consultation and how long a company must wait if they do not hear back regarding the application.

“The FCC needs to develop a better process for handling cell phone tower applications that is both efficient and fair,” **said Johnson**. “In many of these cases there are no objections to the construction of the towers, and yet a lack of clear process has led to a severe backlog of applications with the FCC. Communications infrastructure is central to the vitality of our rural areas, and I will continue to work to enhance communications in the most efficient, fair way possible.”

Herseth said, “Telecommunications infrastructure is a necessary component to economic development in sparsely populated rural areas, including much of South Dakota. Communication with one's family and business is essential to our rural way of life. I encourage the FCC to work to resolve this issue in a fair and expedient manner, and I am optimistic that communities across South Dakota will benefit from this progress.”

Johnson and Herseth sent a letter this week to FCC Chairman Kevin Martin encouraging

him to work with his fellow commissioners, industry representatives and all other interested parties, including American Indian Tribes to resolve the backlog in as equitable a way as possible. Current estimates suggest that about 1,000 applications are on hold nationwide, and several communities in South Dakota are affected by this backlog. As winter approaches, time available for construction is increasingly limited.

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Congresswoman Stephanie Herseth serves South Dakota in the U.S. House of Representatives. She is a member of the Blue Dog Coalition, a group of moderate Democrats committed to fiscal discipline and strong national security, and is co-chair of the Rural Working Group, which is dedicated to raising the profile of issues important to rural America. She also serves on three committees vital to South Dakota's interests: Agriculture, Veterans' Affairs and Resources.